

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 SS-20 NSC-07 SCS-03 SCA-01 SY-04 L-03

H-03 PRS-01 IO-14 EB-11 DRC-01 RSC-01 NEA-14 SSO-00

NSCE-00 SCCT-02 NSAE-00 (ISO) W

----- 032804

O 031125Z JUN 74 ZFF-6

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL ASMARA NIACT IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASDC IMMEDIATE 8254

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 1245

MESSAGE FOR FREEMAN AND WILSON, ATHENS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, CASC, ET

SUBJ: TENNECO SEVEN

1. BURGHER ARRIVED KHARTOUM 0200 MONDAY 3 JUNE. HE AND GRAHAM REVIEWED TRAFFIC AT EMBASSY RECEIVED 2 JUNE AND TOGETHER MET WITH ZEIN AT 0900 FOR DISCUSSION ENTIRE SITUATION.

2. ZEIN STATED HE NOW HAD CONFIRMED THAT IT WAS NOT RPT NOT ELF GROUP WHICH ATTACKED HOSPITAL AND KIDNAPPED NURSES AND HELICOPTER BUT HE INDICATED AWARENESS THAT NURSE AND PILOT ARE NOW IN ELF HANDS. BURGHER THEN ADVISED HIM WE HAD LETTER FROM ELF TO EFFECT THAT ELF IS DETAINING NURSE AND PILOT AND THAT IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT ELF IS HOLDING TENNECO ORIGINAL FIVE ALSO, WE ARE NOW DISCUSSING WITH ZEIN AND ELF COMMAND ALL SEVEN HOSTAGES AS A GROUP. ZEIN THEN SAID IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO TREAT ALL SEVEN HOSTAGES AS A GROUP BECAUSE THE FIRST FIVE ARE NOW MORE THAN 200 KM. FROM THE NURSE AND HELICOPTER PILOT. HOWEVER, HE INDICATED THAT ELF IS KEEN TO TURN OVER ALL SEVEN AND THAT THE MECHANICS OF DOING SO MUST ASSURE SECURITY OF ELF MEN HANDLING THE TURN-OVER.

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3. FROM ZEIN'S COMMENTS, WE ASSUME FIRST FIVE ARE IN WEST OR NORTHWEST ERITREA AND NURSE AND PILOT ARE STILL IN GHINDAR AREA. ZEIN ALSO STATED THAT ONE IMPORTANT REASON THAT ELF IS KEEN TO MAKE TURN-OVER OF HOSTAGES QUICKLY IS THAT RAINY SEASON BEGINNING (WITH UPSURGE MALARIA PROBLEM) IN AREA AND GROUND MOBILITY IS SEVERELY RESTRICTED DURING MUCH OF THE NEXT ENSUING PERIOD. HE ALSO STATED THIS WOULD WORK AGAINST, AND WOULD DELAY, CONSOLIDATING ALL SEVEN HOSTAGES INTO ONE GROUP, AND THAT HE BELIEVED RELEASE OF FIRST FIVE AND SECOND TWO SHOULD BE SEPARATELY HANDLED. BURGHER SAID HE WAS DISCUSSING TERMS FOR ALL SEVEN. ZEIN SAID HE WAS DISCUSSING TERMS FOR FIRST FIVE BUT THAT THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM IN ALSO RELEASE OF NURSE, PILOT AND HELICOPTER.

4. CONVERSATION THEN MOVED TO DISCUSSION OF THE FOUR DEMANDS AS FOLLOWS:

(A) CONCERNING RETALIATION AND MILITARY ACTION AGAINST ELF BY IEG, BURGHER ADVISED HIM THAT TENNECO HAS BEEN ASSURED THAT IEG WOULD TAKE NO SUCH ACTION AS RESULT OF THIS MATTER. ZEIN SAID THE ELF IS ALSO CONCERNED WITH SECURITY OF THE ELF MEN AT THE RELEASE POINT. BURGHER ADVISED HIM THAT SAFEST POINT WOULD BE ACROSS INTO SUDAN, BUT ZEIN SAID QUICKEST WOULD BE RELEASE POINT IN ERITREA. HE SAID MECHANICS OF RELEASE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM IN WESTERN ERITREA WHERE THEY ARE ABLE TO MOVE ABOUT FREELY BUT HE WORRIED ABOUT BETRAYAL OF LOCATION OF A SPECIFIC POINT. BURGHER SAID COULD WE ASSURE HIM HE WILL TAKE STEPS TO ASSURE NO INTERFERENCE AT SUCH POINT.

(B) CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE, BURGHER ASSURED HIM TENNECO WOULD MAKE FULL COVERAGE RELEASE AS PER ELF REQUEST.

(C) CONCERNING RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS BY IEG, BURGHER ADVISED HIM WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN ADVISED BY IEG THAT IEG WOULD COOPERATE IN THIS. BURGHER INQUIRED IF ELF HAS LIST OF SPECIFIC NAMES AND HOW MANY. ZEIN SAID YES THEY HAVE LIST OF APPROXIMATELY 35 NAMES.

(D) CONCERNING THE MATTER OF RANSOM, THERE WAS QUITE A CONFIDENTIAL

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LENGTHY DISCUSSION. BURGHER EXPLAINED TO HIM THAT CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AND UN HAVE VERY STRONG POLICY AGAINST PAYING RANSOM AND THAT ELF CANNOT LOOK TO THAT SOURCE FOR ANY PAYMENT. IN ADDITION, ZEIN WAS TOLD THAT TENNECO, AS A COMPANY, COULD NOT PAY RANSOM DUE TO CONSIDERATION OF FACT THAT TO DO SO WOULD ENCOURAGE FUTURE ATTEMPTS AGAINST TENNECO EMPLOYEES ALL AROUND THE WORLD. ZEIN THEN SAID THAT HIS SUPERIORS KNOW THAT CANADIAN AND UN PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED AND HE NOW TAKES NOTE OF THEIR

ATTITUDE ON RANSOM AND SUGGESTED THAT TENNECO MAY ONLY WISH TO DEAL FOR THE AMERICAN TENNECO EMPLOYEES. BURGHER SAID TENNECO WAS OPERATOR FOR GROUP AND GROUP MUST BE CONSIDERED AS A WHOLE; I.E., ALL SEVEN. BURGHER THEN SAID THAT IF ANY MONEY AT ALL WERE TO BE PAID IT COULD ONLY COME FROM FREEMAN ACTING AS AN INDIVIDUAL. ZEIN THEN SAID TO GIVE HIM OUR DEFINITE OFFER AND HE WOULD RETURN IMMED. TO HIS SUPERIORS WITH IT. ZEIN ALSO SAID HE WOULD RECOMMEND TO HIS SUPERIORS THAT ALL HOSTAGES BE DEALT WITH AS ONE PKG. INsofar AS RANSOM IS CONCERNED.

ACTION FOR ALL ADDRESSEES:

BURGHER AND GRAHAM NOW RECOMMEND YOU TAKE FOLLOWING COURSE: FIRST, REAFFIRM FROM IEG THE COOPERATION ON DEMANDS (A) AND (C) ABOVE. SECOND, CONFIRM TO BURGHER THAT THE MONEY FIGURE GIVEN HIM YESTERDAY IS MAX. THIRD, NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE CARRIED ON IN KHARTOUM - ZEIN HIMSELF IS NOT IN SOLE AUTHORITY AND MUST CLEAR WITH SUPERIORS IN W. ERITREA WHICH WE ASSUME HE DOES BY RADIO. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO BRING THE DECISION-MAKING GROUP OUT OF ERITREA TO ANY POINT IN EUROPE OR EVEN AFRICA OR MID EAST WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION KHARTOUM OR KASSALA. IF ZEIN OR ANY OTHER ONE PERSON DID COME TO GENEVA, FOR INSTANCE, THAT ONE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO COMMUNICATE BACK TO THE COMMAND COUNCIL BEFORE ANY AGMT. COULD BE FIRM. REQUEST YOUR ADVICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AS WE HAVE ANOTHER MEETING WITH ZEIN BEFORE 1600 HOURS TODAY.

ADDITIONAL COMMENT OF INTEREST: ZEIN STATED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT PEOPLE SUCH AS IBRAHIM AL-MORGHANI (SPECIFICALLY MENTIONING HIM BY NAME) HAD CAUSED A LOT OF PROBLEMS AND CONFUSION IN THIS MATTER AND THAT HE REGRETTED THE INTERVENTION OF SUCH OPPORTUNISTIC PEOPLE.

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SIGNED BURGHER AND GRAHAM, INTERESTED PARTY
BREWER

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